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PITTSFIELD, MASS.  
BERKSHIRE EAGLE

E. 29,071

APR 26 1961

Editorials

## An Overdue Look at the CIA

One would need to be an excessively cheerful Charlie to extract any sizable crumbs of comfort from the rubble of last week's abortive invasion of Cuba. It was a five-star fiasco reflecting credit on no one.

Nonetheless it may have one healthy byproduct. If the investigation ordered by President Kennedy into the role of the Central Intelligence Agency results in a closer rein on this country's cloak-and-dagger operations, the chances of similar bumbles in the future will be diminished.

That the CIA badly needs intensive examination is as plain as a pikestaff. Originally designed as an information-gathering agency, it has taken advantage of its super-secret status and its freedom from close congressional and executive scrutiny to expand into policy making and policy execution. Clearly this is an area from which it should be dislodged.

The proof is on the record. The two worst diplomatic setbacks this country has suffered in the past decade are the Cuban misadventure and the U2 episode of last May, and the CIA was deeply involved in both. In the case of the U2, it authorized on its own an ill-advised overflight across Russia on the eve of a summit meeting. In the case of the Cuban adventure, it not only operated on the basis of faulty intelligence information but also supervised the operation. With what appears to have been a remarkable degree of inefficiency.

This isn't to say that the CIA must take the full blame. Its faulty judgment could have been questioned and vetoed by the White House in both the U2 and Cuban affairs. Yet the fact remains that in an age in which cloak-and-dagger operations are increasingly important to survival, the need is impera-

tive for a more able and responsible intelligence agency than we now have. The CIA cannot be permitted to become an empire of its own, immune to close scrutiny and supervision.

The first need is to strip the agency of the policy-making functions it has been permitted to assume, restoring it to its basic role as an espionage and fact-gathering organization. The task of formulating and executing policies based on CIA data should obviously be the function of the State and Defense Departments, not the CIA itself.

The second need is to provide closer supervision of CIA activities both by Congress and by the executive branch. In the early years of the agency, a three-man committee composed of the under-secretaries of defense and state and the CIA director reviewed all proposed CIA projects and reported its approval or disapproval to the National Security Council. Some sort of watchdog setup along these lines should obviously be revived. As for congressional scrutiny, what is probably most desirable is a joint supervisory committee like the one that has worked with notable success in overseeing the Atomic Energy Commission, which is comparable to CIA in that its activities are highly secret and its appropriations are enormous.

President Kennedy has done well to place the examination of the CIA in the hands of a committee headed by General Maxwell D. Taylor, whose competence and objectivity are unquestioned. He has also done well to emphasize that the objective is not to find scapegoats but to find better ways of conducting supersecret undercover operations safely and efficiently in a democracy. This is a vital quest, and one that should be regarded as above political partisanship.